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CORRESPONDENCE

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Is there an elephant in the room? A response to Batavia et al.

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We agree with Batavia et al. (2018) that conservationists should think more critically about trophy hunting. On pragmatic and ethical grounds, they argue that tolerance of hunting in the interests of conservation is misguided. They find the collection of trophies especially disquieting. We suggest insight can be gained from considering the wider context to aspects of their exploration.

Firstly, the authors begin by limiting (although this is broadened later) their perspective to "Western" hunters (North Americans and Europeans) paying to hunt. This leads to a preoccupation with trophy hunting as a ritual of white male supremacy within "a western cultural narrative of chauvinism, colonialism and anthropocentrism." But none of these is unique to Western culture, and nor is the taking of trophies. They disregard local hunting by, for example, the Barabaig, Maasai, and Sukuma hunters who kill lions (for cultural reasons as well as for defense of livestock) and, much like "Western" hunters, take body parts as trophies. Their definition also excludes widespread sport hunting for trophies in the West; focusing on the taking of the trophy also downplays the complexity of hunter motivation.

Secondly, the authors query the basis for a consequentialist perspective: that any conservation benefit is delivered. There are, however, worrying indications that some lion populations would lose habitat if all legal hunting there were stopped (Macdonald, 2016). Recourse to consequentialism does not imply that wildlife is valued only as a commodity. The "we as humans" to which the authors refer includes many stakeholders: we suspect that few conservationists tolerate trophy hunting because they value lions merely as a resource for hunters (many may feel pressured to do so, if only in the short-term, where the alternative is erosion of lion habitat).

Thirdly, the authors' fundamental issue (regardless of any conservation benefit) is commodification of the animals: their reduction to "mere means." They approach this by extending the well-known Kantian imperative to nonhuman animals, but it is worth considering that this extension leads to censure not just of trophy hunting, but of *all* uses of animals, including providing meat. We are sympathetic to the view that inflicting harm on sentient individuals with intrinsic value is morally hazardous. However, that hazard presumably remains regardless of whether killing animals provides sport (or other perceived benefits) to the hunter, or whether that killing *also* provides a trophy. We wonder whether sport hunters, regardless of race or gender, who left their quarry in the field would be thought of as showing more respect to animals than those who took a trophy.

We agree that trophy hunting is widely condemned, at least in the West, and personally we favor the substitution, wherever possible without further diminishing lion habitat, of

ethically less troubling alternatives. But mindful of the deteriorating state of lion conservation, we advocate a "journey" rather than a "jump" to end hunting, in the interests of limiting unintended consequences (Macdonald, Jacobsen, Burnham, Johnson, & Loveridge, 2016). It may be an inconvenient truth, but the conservation of African wildlife currently depends on the Western patrons and markets that Batavia et al. appear to deprecate. This is equally true of nonconsumptive wildlife use, conspicuously photo-tourism. African people bear the cost of living with wildlife. Their voices should be more prominent in the debate on its ethical management.

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